DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 138 UD 027 064

TITLE	Parents Make a Difference.
INSTITUTION	Fordham Univ., Bronx, NY. Graduate School of Education.; Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY	Leon Lowenstein Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	88
NOTE	21p.; For a companion policy report on this program, see UD 027 065.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Advocacy; Elementary Education; *Family Programs; Leadership Training; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Participative Decision Making; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Public Education; School Community Relationship; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	*New York (New York); *Parent Empowerment

ABSTRACT

This handbook discusses the following types of parent involvement in education: (1) decision-making; (2) parents as educators; (3) advocacy; (4) school support; and (5) parent education and support. The benefits of parent involvement are outlined. Examples from New York City's 1987-88 Parent Involvement Program (PIP) demonstrate that parent involvement works in the following instances: (1) when parents and teachers build new relationships; (2) when there is effective and caring leadership; (3) when there are many ways to get involved; (4) when there is communication with everyone; (5) when schools remove some of the barriers to participation; and (6) when connections are made with other community agencies. Photographs accompany the text, and quotations for PIP participants are included. A worksheet on planning a successful parent involvement project, and a list of resources conclude the booklet. (BJV)

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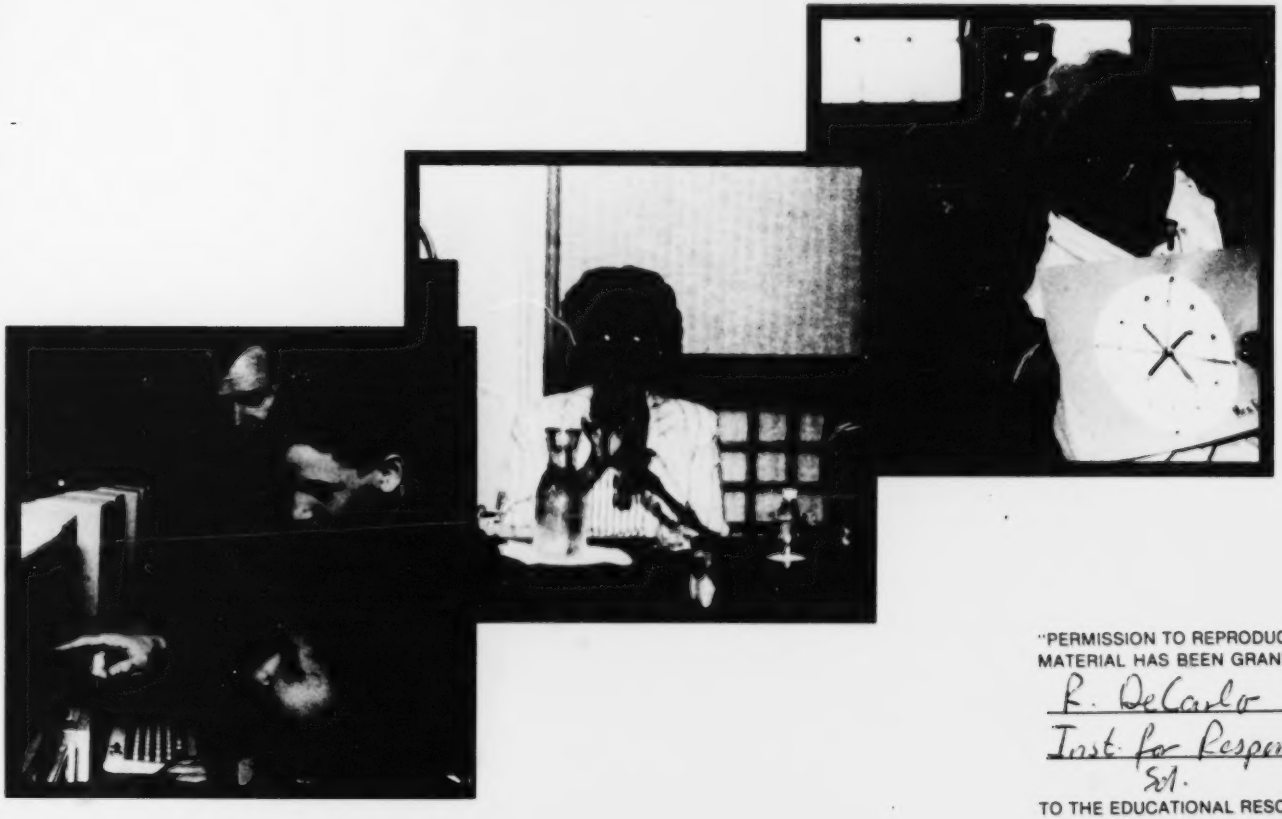
Parents Make a Difference



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About the Project

In September 1987, the Comptroller of the City of New York made $800,000 available to the city's schools to support parent involvement programs.

As a result, during 1987 and 1988, the Parent Involvement Program (PIP) began and funded many different kinds of parent involvement activities in about 160 New York public schools. To get answers to the question "What works?," the New York City Board of Education and the Office of the Comptroller asked the Fordham University Graduate School of Education and the Institute for Responsive Education to evaluate the project. The evaluation was funded by the Leon Lowenstein Foundation.

This evaluation produced three reports: this handbook, a full technical report, and a policy report. The evaluation project has been directed by Barbara L. Jackson of Fordham University, assisted by Don Davies, Bruce S. Cooper, and Jennifer A. Page. This handbook was written by Jean H. Krasnow and Owen Heleen and designed by Gian Lombardo. When this handbook uses the word "we," it is referring to the evaluation team and authors.

The evaluation staff appreciates the help of Mariano Guzman, Doreen DeMartini, Aleida Calabrese, and Sam Matarazzo of the New York City Board of Education; Patricia Beresford of the Office of the Comptroller; John Van Gorder of the Leon Lowenstein Foundation and the hundreds of parents, teachers, principals, school staff, and administrators of the New York Public Schools who worked on the 1987-88 Parent Involvement Program. They shared their successes and frustrations with us. They made the best recommendations. They were the toughest critics. But, most of all, they believe that *parents make a difference*.

What Is Parent Involvement?

Parent involvement can take many different forms. In this handbook, we discuss five types of involvement:

- decision-making
- parents as educators
- advocacy
- school support
- parent education and support.

By *decision-making* we mean parents and educators sharing the process of making decisions about children and schools. An example of decision-making is parent involvement in the creation of an individual education plan (IEP) for special education children. Another kind of decision-making is found in systems that provide parents with some choice in the school or program their child will attend. Parents serving on a council which has responsibility for making important decisions about a project or a school is also decision-making.

Parents as educators refers to those things parents can do, in school, at home, or in the community, to contribute to a student's learning. Such activities include home tutoring programs, homework helper projects, and parent volunteers assisting teachers in the classroom or in preparing instructional materials.

There are two kinds of *advocacy:* individual case advocacy or class advocacy. Examples of individual case advocacy include a parent advocating for "a better shake" for her child by meeting with a principal and the individual grievances of parents that are handled through administrative or legal channels. Class advocacy occurs when community organizations or groups of people seek to protect the interests of a group of children such as those who are new immigrants or whose families don't speak English or try to change a policy or practice in the school.

Good examples of *school support* are the PTA, Parent Association, and other such organizations. These groups typically work to support schools by raising money for school activities, provide information and parent education, advocate increased funding, and build awareness of issues that affect children. Another example of school support is school volunteers who help on such things as discipline, attendance, or chaperoning parties.

Parent education and support programs include counseling, courses, or information to help parents deal with the stress of parenting adolescents, learn English, find out about available health or social services, or join support groups.

All of these kinds of parent participation existed in New York City's 1987-88 Parent Involvement Program.

The Benefits of Involvement

There are many benefits when parents and schools work together:

- When parents are involved, children are helped. Research has shown that parent involvement improves students' academic achievement and self-esteem.
- When parents are involved, the parents are helped. Working together with school people, parents improve their sense of self-worth and acquire useful skills.
- When parents are involved, schools are helped. Schools are better places for everyone when parents and teachers understand one another and are working toward a common goal.
- When parents are involved, our communities are helped. Participation is important in our democracy and our communities are better places to live when schools are healthy institutions educating all our children well.

Hard work and imaginative efforts are needed to ensure that these many benefits are available to all children and parents, including those who schools find hardest to reach.

#1

Parent involvement works when parents and teachers build new relationships

Both teachers and parents have hard jobs they need to understand and help each other with. Good parent involvement projects bring parents and teachers together so they can develop more positive attitudes toward each other.

As schools reach out and create opportunities for parents and teachers to work together, new attitudes develop. Some parents who have had little or no positive contact with the school before, feel better about schools and teachers. They also change their view about the importance of their role as teachers of their own children. They learn a lot of useful information to help teach their children at home as a part of daily family activities. They see the school as a place for their own education as well. Some enroll in language courses, job training, or GED programs. They speak of increasing self-confidence as they learn things of value to them as adults and citizens. Parents often express surprise and pleasure to be invited into the schools and to be treated with respect. Informal settings, discussions, and working together on projects help them see teachers as individuals concerned about their child's learning at school and at home.

Parenting can be difficult and stressful. Parents shouldn't have to "fail" before they get help. When parent involvement projects help parents by providing them with parenting or other skills, they are enhancing their ability to act as educators, too.

Some successful projects show that parents learn about schools and how they work. They learn about what teachers try to teach in different grades. Some parents from different cultures discover how children in America learn in many different ways, such as through play, trips, and making things.

Teachers are also pleased with how interested parents are in their child's education and in helping the child. They speak with feeling about how they learned about the strengths and vitality of cultures other than their own. Teachers grow as they recognize that they can teach other adults. Teachers can learn to be specialists in parent involvement if given time and support. They can become trainers and coaches for their fellow teachers.

Working together is often hard work. Democratic, participatory work is difficult and requires time and skill. Teachers and parents working together imagine better and more interesting programs than either can separately. Such projects make a commitment to the concepts of parent involvement and shared decision-making.

Snapshot

An administrator from District 25's (Queens) district-wide parent involvement project provided this perspective on the gradual development of parent involvement: "There has been a gradual metamorphosis in terms of the role and function of parents. The quality of their involvement has changed to a significant degree. When we started the project, the parents tended to be passive and would accept professional suggestions and ideas rather then offer their own. They would tend to seem intimidated by professionals. Through the course of implementing the project, they learned that their suggestions, ideas, and contributions are important and valued. They no longer seemed intimidated or passive. They seem to have gained an awareness and self-respect."

What Works

In P.S. 1, District 15 (Brooklyn), teachers developed home teaching materials for each grade level. Parents attended workshops to develop the skill and confidence to use the material. Many community school districts conducted similar projects and translated curriculum guides into all the languages commonly used by parents.

P.S. 155, District 4 (Manhattan) found a unique way to reinforce parents' teaching at home: at the first sessions of a workshop, parents learned how to use new materials and teach skills through games and activities and received materials to take home with them. A week later, in follow-up sessions, they compared experiences using the materials and generalized about strategies for working with children.

"The best thing that happened to me is that I learned I could teach my child not only by the book but by everyday experiences (cooking, taking a walk, reading, listening — even a hug could teach a child about caring)."

— Parent, District 25, Queens

"It was a different feeling working with a teacher who was teaching you to teach your child."

— Parent, P.S. 100, Queens

#2

Parent involvement works when there is effective and caring leadership

Leadership that is committed to the concept of parent participation is central to the success of a project. At the school level, the leader is often the principal or the project coordinator designated by the principal. At the district level, the superintendent and a parent program coordinator play key roles. A good mix between district and school level leadership leads to good results.

Leadership styles differ widely, but in successful programs there is a clear delegation of authority and adequate resources are provided to support the projects. Someone is put "in charge." When some school staff match the ethnic, racial, or language background of the main groups that the project is trying to involve, trust and communication develop more quickly.

The leaders of successful programs provide continuous communication between the home and the school. They survey parents to find out what they are interested in and what they need. They build communication networks among parents to encourage participation.

The leaders of successful projects build on parents strengths and cultural differences, teach leadership skills, and seek to empower parents. They also recognize that parents learn by being involved and can take on new roles and responsibilities. Successful leaders encourage and welcome new leadership from either parents or teachers. Leadership can come from Parent Associations. Successful parent involvement projects have revived inactive Associations through the identification of new leaders and training in leadership skills.

What Works

Parent involvement projects develop leadership in many different ways. Here is a sample from New York City's 1987-88 Parent Involvement Program:

- **In District 4 (Manhattan), parents participated in a nine-session training course on community organizing and a "Leadership Institute Retreat."**
- **At Port Richmond High School (Staten Island), project staff provided training for all staff on parent involvement. The principal and others spoke at the regular faculty conference and the project coordinator gave a talk for the guidance department. She also spoke at meetings of each department about creating a "home-school connection."**
- **At P.S. 9 in District 10 (Bronx), 18 teachers were involved in the school's parent involvement project in different ways. So much teacher participation aroused the curiosity and interest of other teachers who were not initially involved. They asked their colleagues who did workshops, "What's it like to teach parents?" and "How can I get to do it next year?"**
- **In a special education school — P.S. 231 at P.S. 180 (Brooklyn) — two teachers successfully shared the position of community liaison, assisted by a paraprofessional. They were able to involve other teachers in weekend parent-child field trips and other activities.**
- **In I.S. 218 in District 19 (Brooklyn), parent involvement activities helped to recruit and motivate new leaders for a dormant Parent Association.**

"The more we share power, the more powerful we become."

— Principal, P.S. 9, District 3, Manhattan

"We value the participation of parents and feel they should share in the decision-making process."

— Principal, P.S. 199, District 3, Manhattan

"We'd like to find ways to have parents become part of the team and draw on their strengths."

— Teacher, P.S. 9, Bronx

#3

Parent involvement works when there are many ways to get involved

The needs and interests of different groups of parents are usually a better starting point than the school's agenda when beginning parent involvement projects. When the school offers many different sorts of activities, parents can enter the school world in a way that is most comfortable or most interesting to them. Some parents enjoy learning about the school curriculum. Others want to learn English first. Others might enjoy planning and carrying out an International Food Festival or a Sports Night for parents and kids.

Activities with a social dimension bring parents and teachers together in new settings and help change attitudes and improve understanding. Parents like to be in places where they feel comfortable. If schools seem large and distant, or the authorities too imposing there is little incentive to become involved.

Some general suggestions from successful programs:

1. Think creatively. The possibilities are endless. Take some risks. Ask parents what they would be interested in doing.
2. Make events as participatory as possible. People like to be involved, make things, go places, be active. Workshops are more successful when part of the time is devoted to "hands-on" work.
3. Choose many different times to schedule events. Field trips on weekends give more family members a chance to attend. Classes during the day may be just fine for mothers of very young children. Evening groups for parents and their adolescents may work best.
4. Don't expect everyone at every event. People will choose what works for them. Just offer enough variety to attract many different constituencies.
5. Reward participation. Show parents that their efforts are respected and appreciated.
6. Schedule events that involve children's performances. Parent attendance is usually higher at these sorts of activities.
7. Provide opportunities to parents at every level. Projects can build on successful efforts to involve parents of very young children. Good things can happen with high school parents. Successful projects challenge the myth that only parents of younger children can be involved.
8. Keep a record of events. Take pictures. Show people how much is going on. Raise expectations for more parent involvement.
9. Continue to offer easy access programs even after a leadership group has emerged. New faces are always welcome and needed!

What Works

Successful parent involvement projects in New York City have developed many, many different kinds of activities. Here is just a partial list:

1. **Sports Night for Parents, Kids, and Staff**
2. **Field trips: boat rides, bowling, sports events, museum trips, performances**
3. **Mother's Day Luncheons**
4. **Workshops for Parents as Educators**
5. **School Volunteer Programs**
6. **Workshops for Personal Development**
7. **Get-Acquainted Dinners**
8. **Parents Support Groups**
9. **Book and Toy Fair or Lending Library**
10. **Parents Visit the School Week**
11. **Lunch With Mom: Nutrition Program**
12. **Homework Helpers Panel**
13. **Independent Reading Workshop**
14. **Class Mothers Breakfast with Principal**
15. **Graduation Party for 8th graders**
16. **Awards Night for Parents Completing Workshops**
17. **ESL Classes**
18. **GED Classes**
19. **Computer Workshops**
20. **High School Career Planning Nights**
21. **Weekend Leadership Retreats**
22. **Tenants' Rights and Neighborhood Services Workshops**
23. **Community Fair**
24. **International Food Festival**

"The workshops have been enormously helpful to me in understanding the feelings of adolescents, their conflicts, and attitudes. Since I started going to the workshop, my relationship with my son has improved. With the insights I have gained, I hope to be able to help him improve his grades.

"We both enjoyed the communications workshops. They let parents vent frustrations, share feelings, discover that other parents had problems too, and learn how to build teens' self-esteem. The workshops made parents more at ease being parents."

— Parent, Curtis High School, Staten Island

Snapshot

P.S. 9 in the Bronx enrolls 1,338 students in grades K-5. Staff there designed and taught 13 workshops for parents focused on the educational and social development of children. Over 50 parents signed a contract to attend regularly the classes which met from 9-11:30 in the morning. Each parent received a packet of materials, notebook, pens, and pencils and completed homework for each class. Topics included school curriculum, child development, parenting skills, and social issues of family life as well as job training opportunities. At the conclusion of the workshops, graduation ceremonies were held. Family members and friends were welcomed at the graduation. Parents have requested the addition of ESL classes to the program and there is a waiting list for next year.

#4

Parent involvement works when there is communication with everyone

Information empowers parents, teachers, and administrators. If parents have access to the same information educators have, they can participate on an equal footing in schools. Schools with successful parent involvement programs do not rely on traditional methods like sending a notice home with students, but instead try a wide variety of strategies.

Successful parent involvement projects translate all information into every language commonly used by parents. Many projects supply interpreters for every language group in attendance at meetings. Some schools have asked community groups to provide translators or interpreters.

Successful programs avoid the use of educational jargon — these code words sometimes prevent parents from fully understanding what is being discussed. Many programs have learned to keep written material clear and simple — often children will translate this material for their parents. Some parents are not fully literate in any language or might be able to read only the simplest material.

Successful parent involvement projects use many different print and non-print media. Some schools have successfully used radio, TV, cable television, and community newspapers to get information out to parents and community members. Other schools have developed "hot lines" that parents can call or telephone trees where parents call other parents as a means of promoting communication.

Face to face, person to person communication is always the best kind. It also seems to help when project staff work with other parents or community agencies (churches, social clubs, business groups, ethnic or cultural organizations) to broaden communication.

"Love comes across in every language."

— District staffer, District 27, Queens

What Works

- At Curtis High School on Staten Island, the PIP Coordinator visited local churches to talk about the importance of parent involvement.

- At J.H.S. 82 in District 9 in the Bronx, parents have agreed to do the phoning for next year to remind other parents about upcoming events as well as calling the parents of absent children.

- P.S. 92 in District 17 (Brooklyn) organized parent-student workshops in which parent volunteers read with, talked and listened to, and played with small groups of foreign-born children in order to enhance their English language skills. At the same school, parent volunteers worked with teachers to create a video introduction to the school using several languages. Another parent-teacher committee wrote a handbook, again in many languages, which included a directory of the school, a listing of community services, and general educational information about how to help a child improve reading and speaking proficiency in English.

- Special education schools regularly telephoned their parents about news of upcoming activities and field trips and to discuss children's progress.

- Eastern District High School (Brooklyn) established a hot line as part of its Parent Center. The hot line was staffed by parents trained to make referrals. The line was open to both parents and students.

- Port Richmond High School on Staten Island set up a Heart Line in which telephones were answered for 90 minutes each school day on a rotating basis by school staff, social workers, and counselors. Parents called anonymously if they wished to talk about their concerns. This system helped parents get information in a non-threatening way.

#5

Parent involvement works when schools remove some of the barriers to participation

Sometimes schools label certain parents "hard to reach" and give up trying. Some parents are very reluctant to work with the school or to visit the school building. For some, schools are a hostile place.

More parents may have had a bad experience when they were in school themselves. For these parents, "the smell of chalk dust is the smell of failure."

Increasingly, many are single parents don't have much time or energy available for meetings at the school. Some parents are poor and struggle to cope with the stresses of city life.

Parents speak many different languages and come from many different cultures. Cultures differ in many important ways, including dress, food, music, manners, symbols, the relations between men and women and children and adults, and ideas about what is important in life.

The key factor seems to be the attitudes of school staff toward races, ethnic groups, lifestyles, and languages different from their own.

It is important to note that schools have cultures, too. Successful parent involvement projects find ways to reduce the barriers between the cultures of the home and the school.

Some of the approaches that work are:

- using cultural differences as a resource for teaching
- scheduling meetings at a variety of times
- arranging for meetings and events in locations other than the school
- meeting with parents in their homes or using other parents as home visitors
- showing all parents that they can contribute to their child's education
- avoiding events that involve parents paying a fee
- announcing meetings and other events long enough in advance for parents to arrange for time off from work
- providing for child care at meetings
- creating an accepting environment for working and single parents, as well as those undergoing divorce or separation
- encouraging parent support groups
- employing people sensitive to the cultures of the school community.

Snapshot

The project at P.S. 155, District 4, a school which is in Spanish-speaking Harlem, assigned their project to two Hispanic teachers, who established an excellent rapport with their parents. The parents said, "The instructors were very helpful and knowledgeable on the subjects. They had patience, understanding, and were concerned and considerate of all the parents' feelings."

"The distances are both physical and psychological."

— Administrator, Springfield Gardens High School, Queens

"They showed the community that the school administration was willing to go into their culture."

— Staff member, Federation Employment and Guidance Service

"Parents may be intimidated simply by coming into the building. Despite our professed commitment to working with parents, schools may be sending out some different 'vibes', some unconscious messages that tell parents to stay away."

— Principal, Springfield Gardens High School, Queens

"We involved parents who had never attended a Parent Association meeting."

— Teacher, P.S. 116, Manhattan

"We got to meet people who grew up in different cultures and learned how they find parents in the U.S.A. different from parents in other cultures and how there are different expectations for teens in different cultures."

— Parent, Port Richmond High School, Staten Island

#6

Parent involvement works when connections are made with other community agencies

The problems of urban schools and communities are complex. It makes good sense to build bridges to community agencies and services. These groups can provide different resources and useful information to parents.

Successful parent involvement programs develop the school as a "hub of services" and show parents that schools can be helpful to them as well as their children. Schools become centers for adult education and information and referral on all aspects of community life.

Staff from other agencies often have areas of expertise different from educators. Schools make these connections in many different ways and at many different levels. They sponsor community fairs to introduce parents and teachers to the social, educational, health and environmental agencies and groups in their community. Parents and teachers write handbooks for parents that list services and local organizations. Speakers from various groups are invited into the school. Community agencies provide parents help with information on parenting skills for adolescents or on behavioral management for emotionally disturbed children. Workshops that are relevant to parents' lives as adults and citizens such as housing, drugs and alcohol, job training, consumer rights, and language classes can be offered by staff from agencies outside the school. This sort of program helps successful parent involvement programs make positive connections with the parents on the parents' terms.

All institutions in the community have a stake in the healthy development of the community's children. Community churches and cultural organizations can help schools explain the importance of parent involvement, encourage parents to participate, and host events.

Working together, schools and community groups accomplish more than either can alone.

Snapshot

The Haitian Parents Outreach Program targeted the parents of 9th grade students at Springfield Gardens High School in Queens. Meetings were planned at the local Haitian Church, clergy urged parents to attend, and the evening was planned for social as well as school related activities. Over 90 parents attended plus 50 students and 10 teachers. In addition, 20 other community members participated. The school's student publication carried a story on the meeting. The students wrote: "The meeting was a success. Our parents who are greatly concerned, showed up considerably. There will be more meetings in the future, and we will encourage all our parents to come and join us in a learning and sharing experience..."

What Works

Successful parent involvement projects make many different kinds of connections with other community agencies. Here are just a few examples:

- **Eight Staten Island high schools joined with a consortium of schools and colleges (The Continuum) and the Federation of Parent Associations to work to revive Parent Associations in each school and to offer information on college and career planning.**

- **The parent involvement project in District 25 (Queens) collaborated with many ethnic, neighborhood groups. For example, a Korean cultural center prepared fliers and materials using a Korean typewriter which was not available to the school.**

- **Community health, social, environmental, and educational agencies had booths at District 3's (Manhattan) Cultural Fair held at P.S. 163 which attracted hundreds of parents and other residents.**

- **The Polaroid Corporation provided a workshop to I.S. 218, District 19 (Brooklyn), on how to use the camera to develop personal expression and children's language skills. The company provided free cameras to those who came.**

- **Working with counselors from a non-profit community agency, I.S. 218 also offered workshops on effective parenting. Later, the agency agreed to provide no-cost counseling to students from the school.**

- **Several Bronx high schools sponsored workshops on tenants' rights and neighborhood services. At Roosevelt High School, a session on tenants' rights was arranged by the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. At Taft High School, the project coordinator worked with parents to write letters to local government agencies protesting the closing of a neighborhood teen health center.**

"...Representatives from all the academies and schools in our area came for the workshop [on career education]. They explained to us about tuition and how to get help paying for it. And we learned about green cards — the job training gave you many opportunities."

— Parent, P.S. 9, Bronx

Planning a Successful Parent Involvement Project
A Worksheet

The worksheet on these next two pages is designed for you to use in planning a parent involvement project. Feel free to copy this form or adapt it for your own school. You might also use this form in a group setting by writing everyone's answers on newsprint or a blackboard.

Consider this form a guide for group discussion. As we have mentioned, working together takes time and is hard work.

The process we describe here can't be covered completely in one meeting. A good stopping point for your first meeting might be question number 3.

If you have a large group, you might try breaking up into smaller groups to discuss these questions and sharing your ideas at the end of each session. Small groups allow for more discussion.

1. Bring together all the people who have an interest in parent involvement in the school. Successful programs involve parents, teachers, school administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, school support staff, representatives of community agencies, and community members who care about the issues. If all of these kinds of people are not present at your first meeting, list below the ways you will get more people involved in your next meeting.

2. As a group, think about the parents in your school. What racial/ethnic groups do they belong to? What languages do they speak? What about their income level? Where do they live? What community groups, churches, or social agencies do they have contact with?

3. Spend some time discussing your goals for parent involvement. What do you want parent involvement to accomplish? If you have time you might consider surveying other members of the school community (parents could ask other parents, teachers could ask other teachers, etc.) Write down your ideas here by filling in the blank in this sentence. You may have several answers.

The parent involvement project in our school should try to: _____

_____

4. As a group, list all the possible activities that might help you accomplish this goal.

5. As a group, think about all the possible barriers to parent participation in these activities (see point #5). Try to define these barriers as a group. Keep discussing these points until everyone agrees what the problem is. Write down some possible barriers here.

6. As a group, brainstorm *all* possible ways around these barriers to participation. (Brainstorming means listing all suggestions without making judgments. Even ideas that seem silly sometimes produce useful ideas.)

7. As a group, review *all* the ideas. Make a list. Cross off the ideas that everyone agrees are not practical. Write your list here.

8. As a group, discuss if the ideas left on your list will help you achieve your goals. Select the idea that *everyone* agrees seems most promising.

9. To develop a plan, take another piece of paper and write your project idea on the top. On that sheet, write down some answers to these questions. Group discussion will help you develop and change the project you are creating.

- What are the first steps needed?
- How does this part of the project help parents and teachers to work together to build new, person-to-person relationships?
- Who will be "in charge" of the project? How can he or she reach out to others?
- Will the project provide many ways for people to get involved? What are some of the different ways people can help the project?
- How will the project communicate with parents? With teachers? With administrators and other school staff? With people from the community and community agencies?
- How will the project make connections with other community agencies? How can they help the project? How will this help the agency? Who should contact the agencies or groups? Should you invite them to join your planning group?
- What sort of schedule or time frame is involved?

10. Now you have an action plan. The project leader should organize your planning group to help provide the project with guidance and new ideas all through the course of the project.

The final piece of an action plan is to ask the question, "How will we know if the project worked?"

Everyone will have some ideas to contribute. It may not be possible to get a "yes" or "no" answer about whether or not the project worked. After you have tried the plan for an agreed-upon period of time, re-evaluate the situation as a group. For help with this planning process, you should consider contacting your community school district office or some of the organizations listed on the last page of this handbook.

Building on Success

Our evaluation of New York City's 1987-88 Parent Involvement Program concludes that the program was a remarkable success. It has paved the way for involving parents in a school-by-school, district-by-district, and citywide campaign for school improvement. Finding new ways to link schools, families, and communities is not a "trivial pursuit" but an important part of the kind of educational reform the Chancellor and many others are calling for.

Too often, all of us focus on what is wrong with our schools and what is lacking in parent involvement. This is called a "deficit view." Focusing on what's wrong may tell us about the problem, but it doesn't very often tell us much about solutions. Increasingly today, parent involvement projects are focusing on the strengths of parents rather than weaknesses. All families have strengths, and if we're after positive growth, that's the place to start.

Our evaluation of New York City's 1987-88 Parent Involvement Program has uncovered hundreds of successes — some large and some small. To increase the level of successful parent involvement in the schools, New York's parents, teachers, and administrators must build on these successes.

Learning to work together takes time and effort. City schools face many challenges. Parents can help schools meet these challenges, but only if we build on the knowledge that parents *can* make a difference.

Resources

More detailed information on this evaluation project is available from the Institute for Responsive Education. For more information on parent involvement projects, contact:

Community Service Society
105 East 22nd Street
New York, NY 10010
(212) 254-8900

Home and School Institute
Special Projects Office
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-3633

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue
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(617) 353-3309

National Committee for Citizens in Education
10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301
Columbia, MD 21044
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National School Volunteer Program
701 North Fairfax Street, Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 836-4880

Public Education Association
39 West 32nd Street
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(212) 868-1640

United Federation of Teachers
280 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010
(212) 228-2983

United Parents Associations of New York
70 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10013
(212) 619-0095

The Institute for Responsive Education has available an annotated bibliography of resources on parent involvement. *A Resource Guide on Parent and Citizen Participation in the Schools* is available for $6.00 per copy.

Published by

Fordham University
Graduate School of Education
Lincoln Center
113 West 60th Street
New York, NY 10023

Institute for Responsive
Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215

Made Possible by a Grant From the
Leon Lowenstein Foundation